



by Bill Williams

One of the things I focus on in my talks is the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, a book created by Stephen R. Covey, with whom my company, The B4 Group Inc., is actually a strategic partner.

A big part of the book is the Maturity Continuum, which all begins with yourself and realizing that Habit #1 of highly effective people is to Be Proactive. This is really the habit of choice. So for example, every day I have the opportunity to choose the mood that I'm in, the attitude that I have, and so I always choose to be positive. Sure there are days that are tougher than others, but no matter how negative the situation is there is always some sort of a positive, if you can find it. You can either put energy into your bucket, or you can allow negative things to drain energy from your bucket.

Habit #2 is really what I think success is all about: Begin with the End in Mind. We first have to decide that we're going to be positive, but then we need to really envision what success looks like for us. We all measure that very differently. For some it's a bank account balance; for others it's the car they drive or the house they live in. For many others—myself included—it's really about the strength of the relationships you have in your life. This step is really about where you see yourself and what you want to accomplish.

Once you've decided where you want to go, the next step is Habit #3: Put First Things First, or Live with Integrity. This is simply doing what you said you were going to do. For me, it's about making sure that those people who are important to me know they're important. It's great to talk about the quality of time you have with them, but it's always nice to ensure you block time off to be with those people, whether it's in person, or a good long Skype conversation, like I have with my Dad. So this step is really about identifying who's important in your life and making sure you put them first.

When you put these three habits together, this is referred to as a Private Victory—a victory with, and of, and for yourself. It's knowing who you are and being really confident in what it is you're about, as you continue to grow and accomplish your own personal success.

From there, Covey moves on to what's called the Public

Victory, which comprises habits four through six.

Habit #4 is to Think Win-Win. Can you always find the win-win in the circumstances life presents you with? It's not easy. It combines having a positive attitude with the belief in abundance.

Habit #5 is To Seek First to Understand and Then to be Understood. This is a really powerful one because it's all about effective communication. If I understand your perspective, then I am able to adapt my response to that. It's about really taking the time to listen first and then responding to what you've heard.

Habit #6 is to Synergize, which is all about creative cooperation. So it's not about things being my way, or about them being your way, but it's about a third alternative where together we find a way that works best for the both of us.

Finally, we come to Habit #7, which ties everything together: Sharpen the Saw. This is the habit of renewal. Like the tool you use to cut a tree, you can saw and saw until your saw is dull. You can keep sawing, but you'll become less effective. So take some time to stop and think about what you need to do to renew yourself on the levels of body, mind, heart and spirit. For me, body is about nutrition, my work-out regimen and getting enough sleep; for my mind it's about being stretched by new ideas and having stimulating conversations with interesting people; for my heart it's all about the relationships that are important to me; and when I think about spirituality I think about connecting with nature. It's so important to block time out to take care of yourself. Some think of this as being selfish, but if you don't take care of yourself first, then you won't be able to take care of all those other people who are important in your life, whoever they may be.

Bill Williams is President of THE B4 GROUP INC., which he started five years ago after realizing that his happiness and success were his to create. The B4 Group Inc. focuses on results! They specialize in four key areas: Leadership Development Training, Executive Coaching, Organizational Development Work and Team Building/ Team Spirit Events. For more information, go to their web-site www.bfourgroup.com.